



5-Year Plan (2024 to 2028) Asotin County Conservation District

For More Information:
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Organization of the Asotin County Conservation District

A political subdivision of the State of Washington – authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

- *The Asotin County Conservation District was organized in 1940. The District includes all of Asotin County excluding incorporated cities and towns. The District also serves the Grouse Flat Area of Garfield County. A Board of Supervisors governs the District, of whom local electors elect three landowners and others who participate in making land use decisions. This takes the form of encouraging proper use and treatment of renewable natural resources and making available the necessary technical and financial assistance. The District also identifies resource conservation problems and opportunities for solving these problems.*

Function of the Asotin County Conservation District

To make available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

We Serve & Why

- *People that live, work, and play in our district*
- *Natural resources included in our district and impact on a regional level*

Mission of the Asotin County Conservation District

- *To advocate, educate and assist people in responsible land management and agricultural practices that conserve and improve air, soil and water quality and fish and wildlife habitat for present and future generations.*

Vision of the Asotin County Conservation District

- *People and agencies working together as one to protect and enhance all natural resources, working lands, and sustainable agricultural viability for present and future generations.*

Values of the Asotin County Conservation District

- *Natural resource conservation on a ridgetop-to-ridgetop approach*
- *Provide on-the-ground restoration and protection of water quality, soil health, riparian and fish & wildlife resources*
- *Helping the citizens of Asotin County with the understanding of conservation issues and practices*
- *Provide services with integrity and professionalism*
- *Provide local leadership, outreach and assistance in a non-regulatory manner*
- *Promote future of sustainable agriculture – successful, profitable, safe food production*
- *Provide on-the-ground activities to protect soil, water, disaster preparedness and recovery, and other related natural resources*
- *Protect farming, ranching, forestry, and rural life*
- *Protect private property rights*
- *Promote Long term conservation planning, implementation, and management*
- *Provide technical expertise*
- *Be a liaison with landowners/cooperators, agencies and organizations*



Ridge-Top to Ridge-Top Approach

- *The Asotin County Conservation District strongly supports conservation efforts based on a ridge-top to ridge-top approach. A healthy watershed requires resource concerns to be addressed throughout the entire watershed. While funding sources direct the work and are focused on specific goals, it is critical to find opportunities to ensure all areas of the watershed are being managed.*

Purpose of This Plan

- *The purpose of this long-range plan is to guide the work of ACCD over the next five years. This is intended to be a working plan, which will continue to evolve as necessary to ensure ACCD responds to changing needs. The plan also identifies current obligations that have already been committed to which will take place during the five-year period covered by the plan.*

Natural Resource Data & Information:

- **Landcover:**
 - Total County Area = 429,302 ac
 - Private land = 281,940 ac
 - Federal land = 71,296 ac
 - State land = 73,950 ac
 - Local Government land = 805 ac
 - Tribal land = 1,311 ac

**Data source – Asotin County Parcel Layer May 2023*
- **Agriculture:**
 - Dryland Cereal Crop
 - Livestock Production
 - Hay Production
 - Irrigated Hay & Crop
 - Orchards
 - Vineyards
- **Water Resources:**
 - Asotin County is within WIRA 35
 - 240 miles of perennial streams within the County
- **Terrain and Soils:**
 - Four distinct landscape units within the County:
 - Mesic forests
 - Dissected highlands
 - Dissected loess uplands
 - Lower Snake River Canyons
- **Habitat and Species:**
 - Steelhead, bull trout, chinook salmon, coho salmon, and lamprey are priority species for stream habitat restoration and protection efforts.
 - Deer, elk, bighorn sheep, turkey, pheasant, quail, grouse, raptors, and songbirds are common species in the County and are valued for recreational purposes.



District Operations

The Asotin County Conservation District strives to effectively and efficiently implement programs to address resource concerns through grants, interagency agreements, and contracts from local, state, and federal agencies and other entities. Regular evaluation of processes ensures our operation is functioning smoothly, transparently, and appropriately to best serve the citizens, cooperators, and natural resources in Asotin County.

District Operations - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Evaluate current funding sources & opportunities for long-term funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current funding sources and the level of engagement for future funding. Evaluate the option of rates and charges. Evaluate other state and federal grant opportunities that we have not utilized. Seek other funding opportunities.
Continue effort to increase electronic filing (paperless as possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas of operation that still rely heavily on paper files and determine if opportunities exist to reduce paper storage. Develop and follow procedures for electronic filing and communications.
Conduct workload review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current workload for each staff. Identify adjustments needed to ensure workload is properly distributed. Use as a tool to determine future staffing levels.
Continuing education for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify needs and opportunities available for each specifically based on their position on the ACCD team.
Continue partnerships to implement and administer specific programs on behalf of other agencies/organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asotin County Voluntary Stewardship Program Asotin County Noxious Weed Control Board Bighorn Health Program
Develop Individual Plans for Cooperators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural Stewardship Plans that include specific planning needs including Weed Management, Nutrient and Pest Management, etc. Incorporate climate smart practices into Stewardship Plans
Provide assistance to cooperators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance and support to all cooperators interested in implementing voluntary conservation

Information, Outreach & Education

Outreach efforts provide the foundation to build relationships with cooperators, citizens, and youth of Asotin County as well as partner agencies and legislative representatives at all government levels. Providing awareness about natural resources, their conditions, and opportunities to protect and restore them is critical to the mission of the Conservation District.

Information, Outreach & Education – Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Increase the public's awareness of the resources offered by ACCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide targeted publications to difference audiences. • Engage community organizations by attending and presenting at meetings/events. • Coordinate with local media to highlight natural resources, resources concerns and opportunities.
Have targeted natural resource information/outreach activities for major resource areas – audience specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the audiences to be reached and what the targeted message/information is needed. • Expand outreach workshops and tours offered. • Develop informational flyers/handouts on opportunities.
Conduct Legislative Day for Leg District 9 and Congressional District 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to other Conservation Districts to plan the event and ongoing efforts. • Presentation and Tour in Asotin County
Create a demonstration area at the county fairgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan on what the demonstration would look like
Provide youth outreach and opportunities to expose them to natural resources and agriculture within the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand Salmon in the Classroom and classroom interactions. • Engage with 4-H and FFA groups to promote natural resource conservation. • Create individual education kits for youth. • Develop additional opportunities to engage youth.
Expand services of the Tree/Shrub Sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mechanism for electronic payments • Create alternative communication options to reduce the need for physical mailings

In-stream Habitat and Flow

Asotin County streams and rivers provide spawning and rearing habitat to salmon and steelhead species on the Endangered Species Act list. The decline in water quality and fish habitat stems from a wide range of sources over decades of misuse. Proactive conservation efforts have been in progress, starting with the development of the Asotin Creek Model Watershed Plan. Significant efforts have been made to enhance and protect streams in Asotin County. The geomorphic assessments completed in 2018 and 2020 provide the road map for the next phase of restoration.

In-stream Habitat & Flow - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Plan for working within a watershed or stream system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline strategy to work on a top to bottom approach. • Identify stream reaches and watershed to target. • Develop communication strategy for targeted stream reaches to engage landowners. • Seek and prioritize project areas that support floodplain connection for improved fish habitat and water storage.
Continue implementing in-stream habitat projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand the instream project list based on funding, capacity, and planning strategy.
Inventory Irrigation Withdrawals for Fish Screens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory all existing irrigation pumps to determine fish screening needs. • Identify funding source for fish screen updates

Plan to update geomorphic assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asotin County plan was completed in 2018 and Grande Ronde/Snake River plan was completed in 2020 – Merge into a single plan update • Develop strategy, timeline, and funding to complete the geomorphic assessment update • Start the update no later that 2028
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Riparian & Wetland Habitat

Riparian and wetland function is critical to supporting water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in and near streams. The first riparian buffers were installed in Asotin County in the late 1990s and has continued to be an important part of the Districts work. The key to a functioning buffer is continued management to support the establishment and maturity of the desired vegetative species. The development of a fully functional riparian buffer takes decades to foster.

Riparian & Wetland - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Create long-term buffer management and enhancement program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop program outline, goals, and objectives to support long-term management of buffers to achieve fully functional buffers. • Develop program cost projections. • Explore funding options for multi-year funding.
Evaluate riparian conditions in the County to prioritize new buffer development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize mapping tools to track current buffers and areas of opportunity. • Develop strategy to engage landowners
Explore feasibility of working land riparian areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot project to promote riparian health in areas where exclusion buffers are difficult to establish and maintain
Inventory wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify wetlands that are natural vs constructed to assist with VSP reporting

Cropland and Soil Health

For decades, the Conservation District focused on tillage management and provided significant resources to support cooperators in their efforts to adopt conservation tillage practices. Less than 5% of cropland is still being managed using conventional tillage practices. With the mass adoption of conservation tillage practices, the focus for cropland and soil health has shifted to other opportunities including the use of cover crops and manure/compost applications.

Cropland & Soil Health - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Explore opportunities to increase the use of precision agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory current use of precision ag tools in Asotin County. • Identify potential savings and opportunities to expand efficiency.
Integrate “Climate Smart”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the benefits of incorporating climate smart

practices into cropping systems	practices into farming operations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding to offer cost-share or incentive payments.
Address Weed Control Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with farmers to identify weed control issues in cropland including perennial cover such as hayland and CRP stands. Explore options to address weed infestations in cropland
Increase the applications of manure/compost to improve soil health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the opportunity to rent district own manure handling equipment. Target low productive cropland acres to increase soil composition. Develop soil testing plan to document soil and crop production changes.

Rangeland Habitat

The rangeland in Asotin County is predominantly made up of steep sloped hillsides that are utilized for livestock grazing operations and wildlife habitat. Native rangeland suffers from encroachment from invasive species and noxious weeds which impacts health and productivity. The canyon systems have highly erodible soils that are vulnerable to erosion if not managed properly.

Rangeland - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Develop grazing management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop individual, customized agricultural stewardship plans Provide cost-share assistance to implement BMPs
Weed Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate weed management into the ag stewardship plans Identify priority weeds by watershed for rangeland
Large Scale Pilot Project Rejuvra Herbicide Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Pilot Project to treat Medusahead in rangeland Monitor effectiveness of treatment
Develop Post-Fire Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify steps to assist landowners in post-fire events. Identify opportunities to collaborate with partner agencies

Livestock Feeding Operations

Confined feeding operations are a vital component to raising livestock. When managed properly, they can provide valuable nutrients for cropland acres and improve soil health. However, when they are not managed properly, they can impact natural resources around the facilities, especially water quality.

Livestock Feeding Operation - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Determine additional manure management needs for each feeding operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with each livestock producer to evaluate their individual needs for manure management. Identify facilities that are undersized or do not have

	<p>existing infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding to implement projects.
Implement feed area clean out program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of manure handling equipment to remove manure from feeding areas
Nutrient Management Plan Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track plan expiration dates. • Develop strategy to ensure expiring plans are updated on a routine basis.

Forest Habitat

The Blue Mountains forest area is the headwaters for ESA listed streams in Asotin County. This makes management of conditions not only important for forest health but also the potential impacts to other areas lower in the watershed. For decades, there has been minimal to no proactive management of forestland. It is critical there be focus on forest management to improve forest health and reduce fire danger.

Forestland - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Update the Asotin County CWPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize secured funding to hire a consultant to update the plan. • Collaborate with agencies and landowners to serve on planning committee. • Identify plan priorities and resource needs
Forest Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and map all community zones in forestland. • Assess values at risk. • Develop engagement strategy to initiate forestry ag stewardship planning
Develop Post-Fire Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify steps to assist landowners in post-fire events. • Identify opportunities to collaborate with partner agencies
Continue implementing forest health and fuel reduction projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand the forest project list based on funding, capacity, and planning strategy.
Home Ignition Zone Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct workshop(s) to train landowners to complete self-HIZ Assessments • Complete HIZ Assessments to initiate defensible space projects

Urban & Non-Commercial Agriculture

While the traditional cooperators of the Conservation District have historically been commercial agriculture producers, there has been an increasing trend of small ranchettes and non-commercial hobby farms in the county. These cooperators are typically located in or near the urbanized areas of the county. While the footprint of these operations is relatively small, the potential impact on natural resources is great. Holistic management for these operations is important to the overall health of the resources.

Urban & Non-Commercial Agriculture - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
Promote Bighorn Health Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to sheep and goat owners on the risks to Bighorn Sheep • Encourage program participation to determine if domestic animals are Movi. carriers.
Promote the comprehensive approach to land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop individual, customized agricultural stewardship plans • Provide cost-share assistance to implement BMPs
Weed Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate weed management into the ag stewardship plans • Identify priority weeds for urban areas • Designate funding to target urban weed control
Develop outreach opportunities for backyard conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities to develop features that can be implemented to support pollinators, wildlife, etc
Tree of Heaven Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify infestation locations in Asotin County
Home Ignition Zone Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct workshop(s) to train landowners to complete self-HIZ Assessments • Complete HIZ Assessments to initiate defensible space projects

Existing Obligations – Projects & Programs in Process

Historically, the Conservation District focused a significant amount of resources on general cost-share projects. These were small projects and typically were completed in a short period. With the development of the geomorphic assessments and other planning efforts, the trend has shifted. Funding sources are emphasizing the need for landscape scale impacts. While small cost-share projects are still being implemented, there is more focus on larger implemented projects to address fish habitat and passage as well as riparian and forestry projects. These projects typically take longer to plan, permit, fund, construct and implement adaptive management. The District is no longer planning workloads and projects on a year-by-year basis but on a long-term basis. Complex and phased projects can take several years to complete. This means a significant amount of district resources including funding and staff time have already been obligated to projects and programs that are in process. It is critical that this be considered when developing the five-year plan.

The list below is a snapshot in time of the projects currently in process which make up a significant amount of the workload during the five-year timeframe covered in this plan. This list will continue to change as project implementation is completed and new funding becomes available.

Projects in Process	Current Status	Land Use
Asotin Creek PA 06	Construction Ready	Instream, Riparian
Asotin Creek PA 3.2	Design	Instream
Asotin Creek PA 11.2	Design	Instream, Floodplain, Riparian
Lick Creek Fire Response	Monitoring	Instream
Kelly Creek PA 45	Design	Instream

Couse Creek PA 79	Adaptive Management	Instream, Riparian
Couse Creek PA 78	Construction Ready	Instream, Riparian
Tenmile Creek PA 65,66,67	Adaptive Management	Instream
Tenmile Creek PA 68.1	Adaptive Management	Instream
Tenmile Creek PA 64	Design	Instream, Riparian
WB Rattlesnake 1-2	Design	Instream, Riparian
WB Rattlesnake 3-5	Evaluation	Instream
Grande Ronde River MS-04	Design	Instream, Riparian
Tranquil Lane Forest Community	Planning & Implementation	Forest
Harlow Ridge Forest Community	Planning & Implementation	Forest
EDRR – Mediterranean Sage	Implementation & Monitoring	Rangeland, Cropland
EDRR – Japanese Knotweed	Implementation & Monitoring	Riparian
Bighorn Sheep Health – Domestic Sheep/Goat Testing	Implementation	Non-Commercial, Rangeland
CREP Buffer Projects	Implementation & Maintenance	Riparian
Riparian Buffer Enhancement Projects 15 cost-share projects currently approved)	Planning & Implementation	Riparian
Rangeland/Livestock Grazing Projects (5 cost-share projects currently approved)	Planning & Implementation	Rangeland

Staffing Needs

- *The Board of Supervisors regularly evaluates the current staffing level and determines future needs based on workload and budget available.*

Annual Budget Needs

- *The annual budget needs and availability will be evaluated, and this information will be utilized to assist in the development of the goals and priorities each year. A detailed budget will be included in the Annual Plan that is developed by the Board of Supervisors.*
- *The Asotin County Conservation District relies on “soft” funding which includes short-term grants, contracts, and interagency agreements. While history shows the District has continued to grow and expand, the lack of a secure and stable funding system remains one of the biggest challenges the District faces.*